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I-15 rebuild from Sandy to Payson gets OK'd

U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary Peters has approved Utah's plans to rebuild 43 miles of Interstate 15 from Sandy to Payson, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced Tuesday.

The Utah Department of Transportation has completed an environmental review necessary to widen the freeway and extend the express lanes from Salt Lake County all the way to U.S. Highway 6 near Payson, but does not have funding to build the whole project.

Instead it will tap \$2.6 billion in state-approved funds to rebuild most of the Utah County portion - from American Fork to Spanish Fork. That's the most-congested part, UDOT spokesman Nile Easton said.

"Down the road," he added, "we can certainly look at [the rest of the project]." The full project would cost about \$5 billion to \$7 billion once bond debt is repaid. "This marks a major milestone for the region's thousands of drivers anxious for relief from traffic tie-ups," Peters said in a written statement.

She called the freeway one of her department's six priority "Corridors of the Future" because I-15 connects growing population centers from Salt Lake City to San Diego.

- Brandon Loomis

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